

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAB-01

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R 111548Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY NASSAU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8494

INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L NASSAU 1269

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINS PINT PN

SUBJ: PANAMA

1. AT A RECENT SOCIAL EVENT, I WAS INTRODUCED TO MR. ROBERT MCGRATH. MR. MCGRATH IS APPARENTLY A PROMINENT PANAMANIAN CITIZEN OF CONSIDERABLE WEALTH. ONE OF HIS PARENTS WAS AMERICAN AND WHILE HE AND HIS BROTHER, WHO IS ARCHBISHOP OF PANAMA, HAVE RETAINED THEIR PANAMANIAN CITIZENSHIP, AS I UNDERSTAND IT, HE HAS TWO BROTHERS WHO ARE AMERICAN CITIZENS.

2. MR. MCGRATH CLAIMED VERY CLOSE CONTACTS WITH SENIOR PANAMANIAN OFFICIALS, CLAIMING TO HAVE "BEEN BROUGHT UP WITH THE PRESIDENT OF PANAMA".

3. ACCORDING TO MR. MCGRATH, WHILE THE PANAMANIAN UNDERSTAND THAT NOTHING CAN HAPPEN ON THE CANAL UNTIL AFTER THE ELECTION, A STUDENT MARCH WHICH IS TO INCLUDE REPRESENTATIVES FROM "MANY LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES" IS TO BE MADE ON THE CANAL IN FEBRUARY OR MARCH OF 1977. WHEN I NOTED THAT IT SEEMED UNLIKELY THAT A NEW ADMINISTRATION WOULD HAVE BEEN IN A POSITION TO TAKE CONCRETE MEASURES ON THE CANAL ISSUE THAT SOON AFTER INAUGURATION, MR. MCGRATH CONCEDED THAT HE WAS AWARE OF THIS BUT THAT THE PANAMANIAN SEEMED DETERMINED NEVERTHELESS TO GO THROUGH WITH THE MARCH

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EVEN IF THIS RESULTED IN BLOODSHED. MR. MCGRATH CLAIMS

TO HAVE COUNSELED MODERATION, HOWEVER, HE STATES THAT THE MOOD OF THE PANAMANIAN IS THAT THEY BELIEVE THEY HAVE BEEN STALLED BY U.S. TACTICS FOR YEARS AND ARE UNWILLING TO WAIT MUCH LONGER.

4. I HAVE NO FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT MR. MCGRATH AND NO WAY OF JUDGING THE ACCURACY OF HIS STORY CONCERNING THE PROJECTED STUDENT MARCH. I SIMPLY PASS IT ON FOR WHATEVER IT IS WORTH.
WEISS

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NNN

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